



# Improving the Lives of People with Limb Loss

## WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

The 1996 National Health Interview Survey indicates that nearly 12 million people in the United States have an extremity absence or limb loss (excluding tips of fingers or toes only), which yields a prevalence of 4.9 per 1,000 persons. Data from the Healthcare Costs and Utilization Project, National Inpatient Sample, indicate that between 1988 and 1996 an average of 133,235 limb-loss-related hospital discharges occurred per year, and 82 percent of these were due to vascular conditions such as diabetes and peripheral vascular disease. The risk of amputation increases substantially as people grow older, mainly due to age-related risks including diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular complications. Generally, men are at higher risk than women, and African Americans have a greater risk of amputations due to higher occurrences of vascular disease. People who experience limb loss often express concerns about the inadequacy of prostheses and the isolation that is common among people with a relatively rare condition.

Limb loss often results in reduced mobility and increased reliance on prostheses for daily activities like walking and climbing stairs. While current technologies allow for a more complete range of motion and ability, the advances in products and services do not address all health concerns. Conditions for which people with limb loss might be at increased risk include pressure sores, muscle atrophy/deterioration, depression, and obesity. These conditions can be prevented through education and health promotion programs.

## WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

- Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health was awarded a cooperative agreement that supports research on the epidemiology and consequences of limb loss and limb deficiency.
- CDC financed the Amputee Coalition of America to develop and operate the National Limb Loss Information Center (NLLIC). The programs and services of NLLIC include a national hotline (1-888-AMP-KNOW), a website ([http://www.amputee-coalition.org/nlllc\\_about.html](http://www.amputee-coalition.org/nlllc_about.html)), referral services, educational curricula, youth programs, a national peer network, consumer publications, fact sheets, and a library catalog.
- CDC funded the University of Washington School of Medicine to study the impact of social support among people living with limb loss.

## WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

- Ensure that people with limb loss are included in all programs designed to improve the health and well-being of people with disabilities.
- Develop additional interventions aimed at promoting general health and improved quality of life for people with limb loss and limb deficiency.
- Expand research on vulnerable populations such as ethnic minorities and people with diabetes.